

St. Paul, MN -- Members of the South St. Paul Healthy Youth Community Coalition (SSPHYCC), a coalition that works to prevent and reduce alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among young people in South St. Paul, met with Congresswoman Betty McCollum at her district office on Aug. 31, 2010. The Congresswoman, who was born and raised in South St. Paul and graduated from South St. Paul High School, wanted to learn about the work that the coalition is doing to keep the youth of her hometown safe and healthy.

Coalition member and school board member Wendy Felton talked about the important work that the coalition was doing in the schools, including the MOST of Us® campaign, which highlights the positive by showing that most South St. Paul students are making healthy choices. Ellie Church, SSPHYCC Coordinator, explained that the coalition also funded Project Northland, an alcohol use prevention curriculum for 6th-9th graders, and Reconnecting Youth, a prevention program for at-risk youth in 9th-12th grade.

Carmen Robles, the Latino Outreach Coordinator for the coalition, spoke about the Jóvenes de Salud group at South St. Paul High School, an after-school group that engages students in their community and helping to make it a better place. Jóvenes de Salud member Salvador Martinez-Fleming, a 10th grader at South St. Paul High School, talked about how the Jóvenes de Salud program has provided him & his friends a place to learn and socialize with each other, and how it's given him a place to help his friends when they struggle with making healthy choices.

"The Healthy Youth Coalition has been doing wonderful and important work for our community," said Congresswoman McCollum. "Their work is making a real difference in the lives of young people in South St. Paul."